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ABSTRACT

During May and June of 1976, a random sample of nearly one thousand Wisconsin citizens was interviewed by telephone and asked 28 questions about selected education-related issues. Topics concerning state school district relationship included equal educational opportunity, state financing of education, state aid to parochial school students, state support for early childhood education, state control of course content, state minimum standards in subject matter area, and statewide comparison of pupil performance. Citizens were also queried about their attitudes toward the teaching of basic skills, everyday living skills, and sex education; and if they felt that the needs of both gifted and handicapped students were being met. Other topics included attitudes toward due process procedures, teacher strikes, balancing school enrollment by race, and methods of integrating schools. An overview summarizes the issues and the opinions of those interviewed. The actual wording of each question and detailed information about the responses are presented in the main section of the report. The appendix presents the characteristics of the sample and compares the sample demographic characteristics to both the 1970 census data and 1975 population projections for Wisconsin. (MLF)

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PUBLIC OPINIONS ABOUT EDUCATION:

A STATEWIDE POLL OF WISCONSIN RESIDENTS

by

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October 1976

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OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

During May and June of 1976, a random sample of nearly one thousand Wisconsin citizens was interviewed by telephone about selected education related issues. The sampling and interviewing were conducted by the Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory of the University of Wisconsin-Extension.

This overview summarizes the issues and the opinions of those interviewed. The question numbers relating to each topic are in parentheses after each topic heading. The actual wording of each question and detailed information about the responses are presented in the main section of this report.

Citizens Grade the Schools (Q. 1)

Approximately half (49%) of the Wisconsin citizens interviewed graded their local school's performance as A or B. This is slightly higher than the grades assigned nationwide on the 1976 Gallup Poll of Public Attitudes Toward Education, which reported 42% of the nation's citizens assigned A or B grades for their schools.

49% A/B
42% A/B

Basic Skills (Q. 2)

Fifty percent of the survey's respondents believe today's high school graduates' skills in reading, written expression, and math are lower than those of twenty years ago.

50%
lower basic
skills now

Everyday Living (Q. 3, 4)

Slightly less than half (46%) do not believe enough emphasis is presently placed on everyday living skills such as preparing income tax forms, financing homes, borrowing money, and obtaining a job. Ninety percent of the respondents expressed the opinion that any increased emphasis on such skills should be directed to all students, regardless of whether or not they were college-bound.

46% -
more
living
skills

Out-of-School Study Opportunities (Q. 19)

Public opinion about the desirability of out-of-school study was favorable; about 70% of the respondents said high school students should be given more opportunity for out-of-school study and work experience, and that high school credit should be granted for such experience. About half also favor such opportunities being provided during the regular school day.

90% - All
students

70% more
out-of-school
work + study

Compulsory Attendance Age Limits (Q. 5)

Nearly three-fourths (73%) favor the present compulsory attendance age limits, and an additional 13% favor increasing the age limit to 18, regardless of the availability of vocational-technical classes.

73% - age
16 to 18
13% → 18

State Financing of Education (Q. 6)

A majority (58%) approved of the present level of state financing (which is around 40% of local district operating costs on the average). Over one-fourth (29%) favored a moderate increase of the level of state financial support.

Local Budget Increase Limit (Q. 7)

Presently, there is a state mandated limit of 9.5% on the amount a local district can increase its budget. Seventy-three percent of the respondents favored local control over district budget increases, rather than the present state prescribed limit.

73% oppose
cost controls

Equality of Educational Opportunity (Q. 8)

An overwhelming majority (at least 80%) supported equal educational opportunities for female students, minority background students, and students in school districts with few financial resources. A clear majority (63%) also favored the provision of state funds to assure equal educational opportunities for students "whose achievement might be lowered due to economic or social factors such as poverty or rural isolation."

80% equal
ed. opp.

63% -
state \$ to
equalize opp.

State Aid to Parochial School Students (Q. 28)

Slightly less than two-thirds (63%) favored the state providing all permissible materials, supplies and services to parochial school students to the fullest extent allowed under the Wisconsin Constitution.

63% fullest
poss. nonpublic
support

State Support for Early Childhood Education (Q. 9)

Three-fourths (77%) did not favor state financed early childhood education programs.

77% opposed
state financed
early child. ed.

Meeting the Needs of Gifted or Handicapped Students (Q. 10, 11)

About 46% of the respondents believed their local schools were meeting the needs of gifted or handicapped students. More than 20% did not express an opinion.

46% gifted/
handicapped needs met

Sex Education (Q. 12)

Seventy-one percent said the schools should "provide instruction in sex education that includes basic biological and health facts." An additional 8% favored the introduction of such topics, but under various restrictions such as the age of the student or how the subject would be taught.

71% - favored
sex ed.

State or Local Control of Course Content (Q. 16)

Opinion on the control of course content was nearly evenly divided. Forty-eight percent favored the present local control, and 40% preferred a "mandatory and uniform statewide description of course content" in each of the major subject matter areas.

48% - local
course control
40% - state
curriculum

Statewide Minimum Standards in the Subject Matter Areas (Q. 17)

There was clear support for state enforcement of "minimum educational standards for all local school districts in major subject matter areas." Eighty-two percent of the respondents favored such enforcement.

82% favor
minimum ed.
standards enforcement

Statewide Comparison of Pupil Performance (Q. 18)

A strong majority (68%) approved of having "local district pupil performance in reading, math and written expression compared to the performance of pupils in other districts of the state." Taken in the context of responses to the preceding two topics, it appears the public wants state monitored quality control of the processes (educational standards in the subject matter areas) and results (pupil achievement) of local schools, but nearly half would balk at such monitoring and control extending to mandating certain course content.

68% favor
pupil perf.
comparisons

Public Use of School Facilities (Q. 13)

Public support was strong for the availability of public school facilities "during non-school hours for use by the local community for recreational and educational activities. Eighty-three percent favored such availability, and another 7% favored the availability with some qualifications (such as supervision of activities or the kind of activities).

83% -
pub. use of
sch. facilities

Parental Involvement in Regular School Activities (Q. 14)

A large majority (84%) agreed it is a good idea that "parents have greater involvement in everyday within school activities in public schools."

84% favor
more parental
involvement

Control of Teacher Certification (Q. 15)

A clear majority (64%) favored the present program of teacher certification by the Department of Public Instruction, but a sizable minority (19%) favored changing to certification by "a teacher-controlled organization."

64% DPI
19% WEA/
tchr. org.

Legalization of Teacher Strikes (Q. 20)

Only one-fourth of the respondents favored teachers being granted the legal right to go on strike. Opinion was so strongly against teacher strikes that nearly one half (48%) favored "strengthening the laws to prevent all teacher strikes."

25% favor
tchr. strikes
48% - oppose
strikes

Discipline (Q. 23)

A clear majority (58%) were satisfied with the level of pupil discipline and control in their local public schools. However, almost one-third (29%) were not. There may be regional differences in these opinions, since urban areas are most often cited as having discipline problems.

58% discipline
OK

29% discipline
not OK

Student Use of Drugs and Alcohol (Q. 24, 25)

Over half (59%) believed the use of drugs and alcohol by local students both during and after school was a "very serious problem."

59% drug &
alcohol prob. very
serious

Balancing School Enrollments by Race (Q. 21)

Scarcely more than one-fourth (27%) favored schools making "special effort to balance school enrollments by race."

Only 27% favor
efforts to integrate
schools

Methods of Integrating Schools (Q. 22)

Four methods school districts could use to balance school enrollments by race were perceived with varying degrees of favorability. The methods, and percents of respondents favoring each method, were: voluntary enrollment anywhere in the school district--66%; voluntary enrollment in neighboring school districts--62%; bussing within the school district--46%; bussing between school districts--23%.

Public Support for Due Process Procedures (Q. 26, 27)

88% favor student
due process

Due process procedures refer to an accused student being told what the accusation is and being given the opportunity to present his or her side before being suspended, expelled or otherwise seriously disciplined. Respondents were told of the recent Supreme Court ruling that students have the right to due process procedures and were asked if they agreed or disagreed that schools "should make every effort to insure that an accused student does get due process procedures."

Nearly nine-tenths (88%) favored due process procedures for students. When asked if they thought the Court's decision would make it "harder for the schools to maintain discipline and control," over half (52%) did not think this would happen, and only one third (31%) thought the decision would make it harder for schools to maintain discipline.

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SURVEY RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this opinion poll, conducted by the Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory, was to objectively determine Wisconsin Residents' beliefs and views on selected educational issues. The issues were identified by representatives of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Questions incorporated in this survey covered a broad range of topics including the present quality of education, financing education, curriculum, parental involvement, equal educational opportunity, and discipline.

The Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory, University of Wisconsin-Extension, conducted the telephone opinion poll during May and June, 1976. Approximately one thousand Wisconsin citizens, chosen by sampling techniques that insure representativeness, were interviewed. Background information (such as age, where they lived, family income, etc.) provided by the respondents was used to verify the representativeness of the obtained sample.

The sampling methods and sample size permit estimates of statewide percentages with a maximum probable error of plus or minus 4%. Additional information about the sampling procedures and background characteristics of the respondents is provided in Appendix A. Known or estimated population characteristics are also provided in this appendix for comparison.

The survey questions are presented verbatim in this report in the same order in which they were asked. Following each question is a breakdown of the responses.

Question 1: The public's rating of Wisconsin's schools.

For several years, public pollsters have asked nationwide samples of respondents how good a job they thought their schools were doing. The respondents to this statewide survey were asked a very similar question.

Students are often given the grades of A, B, C, D and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves in your community were graded in the same way. What grade would you give your public schools here--A, B, C, D or FAIL?

The responses of the statewide sample were as follows:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>
A	13%
B	36
C	19
D	4
Fail	3
Don't know	24
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	100%

^aLess than ½%.

Thus, 49% of the Wisconsin respondents rated their schools as A or B. These results are slightly higher than the 1976 nationwide survey results of the Gallup Poll of Public Attitudes Toward Education, which reported the following: A--13%, B--29%, C--28%, D--10%, Fail--6% and Don't know/No response--14%.

When the responses of those who did not know were eliminated from the analysis, the percentages of grades assigned by Wisconsin citizens expressing an opinion were: A--17%, B--48%, C--25%, D--6%, and F--4%.

Question 2: High school graduates' skills today compared with twenty years ago.

Recently, the popular press has printed articles asserting that today's students are not as well prepared in the fundamentals as they were in yesteryear. Public perceptions on this issue were ascertained by asking:

In the basic skills areas such as reading, written expression and math, how do you believe that typical public high school graduates today compare with high school graduates of 20 years ago--higher, the same, or lower?

<u>Skill Level</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Higher	34%
Same	10
Lower	50
Don't know	6
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	100%

^aLess than 1/2%.

Half of the respondents reported they believe today's students have lower skills. This is a majority of those expressing an opinion.

Question 3: Emphasis on everyday living skills.

Closely related to the issue of possible declines in students' basic skills is the issue of how much emphasis to place on skills applicable to everyday situations. Public opinion on this topic was sought with the following two questions (questions 3 and 4).

Do you feel that the emphasis public schools place on instruction in everyday living skills, such as preparing income tax forms, financing homes, borrowing money, obtaining a job, and so forth, is too much, about right, or not enough?

<u>Emphasis</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Too much	7%
About right	35
Not enough	46
Don't know	12
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	100%

^aLess than ½%.

Over half of those expressing an opinion do not believe enough emphasis is presently placed on everyday living skills. This is consistent with reports in popular articles and the press.

Question 4: Who should receive increased emphasis in everyday living skills?

Opinions about emphasis on skills applicable to everyday situations were probed further by the following question.

If the public high schools increased emphasis in everyday living skills, should such increased emphasis be directed primarily to students not continuing their education beyond high school, or should it be for all students?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Students not continuing	6%
All students	90
Depends ^a	1
Don't know	3
Not ascertained	<u>0</u>
TOTAL	100%

^a"Depends" responses were conditional statements that could not be placed in the preceding two categories.

This question, combined with the second and third questions, gives a very clear indication that the vast majority of Wisconsin residents believed all high school students should receive increased emphasis in basic and everyday living related skills.

Question 5: Compulsory attendance age limits.

The following question explained Wisconsin's compulsory attendance laws and asked the respondents' reactions to them. Those who believed the laws should be changed were further questioned to ascertain how they believed the laws should be changed.

Currently, Wisconsin compulsory attendance law requires students to remain in school until they graduate or reach age 16, unless they live in a district having a vocational, technical, or adult education school offering daytime classes. Generally, with the school board's approval, such students must either attend high school or one of these other schools until they graduate or reach age 18. Do you think the age limits of this law should remain just as they are now, or should they be changed?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Remain just as they are	73%
"Changed" or "Depends"	24
Don't know	3
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	100%

^aLess than 1/2%.

Those who responded the laws should be changed or that it "depends" were asked the following question, and their response was written down by the interviewer (the parentheses enclose directions for the interviewer).

In what way would you like to see the attendance law changed? Would you want it to be made uniform at some age, raised, lowered, no compulsory attendance age, or what? (PROSE FOR AGE, UNIFORMITY AND UPPER LIMIT IF VOC-TECH)

The responses of twenty-four percent who were asked this question were categorized as follows:

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent (of total sample)</u>
Make limits uniform at 18	13%
Make limits uniform at 16	3
No compulsory attendance age	1
Make limits 16 or lower	1
Remain in school until graduated, no matter what age	1
Make limit depend upon student's situation and needs	1
Miscellaneous & Don't know ^a	3
Not ascertained	<u>b</u>
TOTAL	24%

^a Less than 1% didn't know, the other 2½% gave highly individualistic responses that could not be classified into any of the relevant categories.

^b Less than 1%.

These responses indicate that nearly three-fourths of the respondents favored the present compulsory attendance age limits, and an additional 13 percent favored increasing the age limit to eighteen, regardless of the availability of vocational-technical classes.

Question 6: State financing of education.

Because of the ever increasing costs of providing quality education, and the heavy burden such increases are placing on local property owners, some writers are arguing for increased state financial support for local schools. The respon-

dents' opinions on the appropriate level of such state support were probed with the following question. The opinions of those favoring a change were probed with additional questions.

On the average, state aids pay for about 40 percent of local school district operating costs. These state monies come mostly from state income and sales taxes. Except for various federal aids, the rest of the local school district operating costs are paid by local property taxes. Any increase in state support to local schools could require an increase in state sales and income taxes. Any reduction in state support could either reduce the school program or cause higher local property taxes. With that in mind, do you think the local costs supported by the state should be less than 40 percent, about the same as now, or more than 40 percent?

<u>Level of State Support</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Less than 40 percent	7%
About 40 percent	58
More than 40 percent	29
Don't know	7
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	101%*

*Does not total 100% due to rounding.

^aLess than 1/2%.

Those who said the state should support less than 40 percent of local school district operating costs were asked what percent the state should support, and whether the slack should be made up by reducing the school program or increasing local taxes. Here are the questions and the responses of the seven percent of the respondents thus questioned.

6a. You said less than 40%. What percentage do you think the state should support?

<u>Level of Support</u>	<u>Percent (of total sample)</u>
30 - 35 percent	1%
20 - 29 percent	1
Less than 20 percent	1
Don't know	3
Not ascertained	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	7%

6b. Any reduction in state support could either reduce the school program or increase local property taxes. Which would you prefer: reduce program, increase local taxes, or other (specify)?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent (of total sample)</u>
Reduce program	3%
Increase local taxes	2
"Other" ^a	1
Don't know	b
Not ascertained	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	7%

^aThese responses ranged from "cut waste" to "more of the cost should be paid by the parents of school children."

^bLess than 1/2%.

Evidently, this small minority who believed the state should provide less financial support did not have a clear concept of either the appropriate level or how the change should be implemented.

The twenty-nine percent of the respondents who said the level of state support should be increased were asked:

You said more than 40%. What percentage do you think the state should support?

Their responses were:

<u>Level of Support</u>	<u>Percent (of total sample)</u>
91 - 100 percent	1%
81 - 90 percent	a
61 - 80 percent	1
51 - 60 percent	7
41 - 50 percent	14
Don't know	6
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	29%

^aLess than 1%.

The majority of these respondents favored a moderate increase, with only very few favoring an increase in state support to more than sixty percent.

Taken together, the responses indicate public approval for the present level of state financing, and some approval of a moderate increase in the level of state financial support to local district operating costs.

Question 7: The budget increase limit.

Public opinion about the desirability of retaining the present state mandated budget increase limit was ascertained with this question.

In general, under state law, the maximum amount a local school district can increase its budget is nine and one-half percent over last year's budget. Should this legal limit on such budget increases be state controlled or locally controlled?

The responses to this question were as follows:

<u>Source of Control</u>	<u>Percent</u>
State	20%
Local	73
"Depends"	1
Don't know	6
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	100%

^a Less than ½%.

Nearly three-fourths of the respondents favored local control over district budget increase limits, rather than the present state prescribed limit.

Question 8: Equality of educational opportunity.

The respondents' views about the importance of providing equal educational opportunity was assessed for four different situations: students in financially poor districts, minority-background students, female students, and students with lowered achievement due to poverty or rural isolation. The question began with this introduction:

I'll read a few things the state might do to provide equal educational opportunities for all students. For each one, please tell me if it is very important, somewhat important, or not important that the state do it.

The four situations and the responses were as follows:

A. Make sure that students in poorer school districts receive the same educational opportunities as students in wealthier districts.

<u>Level of Importance</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very important	84%
Somewhat important	9
Not important	5
Don't know	2
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	100%

^aLess than ½%.

B. *Make sure that black, Native American, Spanish-surname and other minority students have the same educational opportunities white students have.*

<u>Level of Importance</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very important	87%
Somewhat important	9
Not important	4
Don't know	a
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	100%

^aLess than ½%.

C. *Make sure that female students be offered the same educational opportunity male students are offered.*

<u>Level of Importance</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very important	80%
Somewhat important	16
Not important	3
Don't know	1
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	100%

^aLess than ½%.

D. Make sure that the state provides extra funds to local schools for the education of students whose achievement might be lowered due to economic or social factors such as poverty or rural isolation.

<u>Level of Importance</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very important	63%
Somewhat important	26
Not important	8
Don't know	3
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	100%

^aLess than 1%.

Interpreting "very important" as indicating a strong level of support, the vast majority of Wisconsin citizens supported the provision of equal educational opportunities for minority background students, female students and students in districts with few economic resources. A majority (but not nearly as overwhelming) also supported the provision of state funds to assure equal educational opportunities for students "whose achievement might be lowered due to economic or social factors such as poverty or rural isolation."

Question 9: State support for early childhood education.

To ascertain the public's views on state financing of early childhood education, the following question was asked:

Presently, the state provides funds for public school kindergarten programs for children of age five. Should the state also provide funds for education before kindergarten?

The responses were as follows:

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	19%
No	77
Don't know	4
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	100%

^aLess than 1/2%.

Those who said "Yes" were also asked "at what age?" The responses of the 19 percent saying "Yes" were:

<u>Age</u>	<u>Percent (of total sample)</u>
4 - 4.5 years	11%
3 - 3.9 years	6
2 - 2.9 years	1
Less than two years	0
Don't know	a
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	19%

^aLess than 1/2%.

These responses indicate three-fourths of Wisconsin's citizens do not favor state financed early childhood education programs. The minority who do favor state funding of such programs do not believe such programs should extend below age three.

Question 10: Meeting the needs of gifted children.

Public opinion about how well local schools were meeting the needs of gifted children was measured with the following question.

Do you think that local public school programs are or are not meeting the needs of gifted children?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Are meeting the needs	47%
Not meeting the needs	30
Depends	2 ^a
Don't know	21
Not ascertained	<u>b</u>
TOTAL	100%

^aMost of those responding "depends" said that some are, some aren't, it depends on the school and/or the area (e.g., the wealthy school are, less affluent are not).

^bLess than 1/2%.

When the responses of those who said they did not know were excluded from the analysis, the results showed that a clear majority (59%) of those expressing an opinion thought their local schools were meeting the needs of gifted children, whereas 38% did not.

Question 11: Meeting the needs of handicapped children.

Public opinion on the extent to which handicapped children's needs were being met by local schools was estimated by this question.

Do you think that local public school programs are or are not meeting the needs of handicapped children?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Are meeting the needs	46%
Not meeting the needs	28
Depends	2 ^a
Don't know	23
Not ascertained	<u>b</u>
TOTAL	100%

^aMost of those responding "depends" said some schools are unable to handle handicapped children, due to the facilities or lack of appropriate classes.

^b Less than ½%.

When the respondents who did not know were eliminated from the analysis, 60% of those expressing an opinion thought their local schools were meeting the needs of handicapped children, and 37% did not think this was so. The results are practically identical to those for the preceeding question concerning gifted children. The large percentage of "don't know" responses probably indicates the large proportion of persons unfamiliar with school programs for such children.

Question 12: Sex education

The debate about including sex education in the curriculum has been active for a number of years. Public opinion on this issue was assessed with the following question.

Should public schools provide instruction in sex education that includes basic biological and health facts, or should this not be done?

The responses to this question were:

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Should	71%
Should not	15
Depends	9
Don't know	5
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	100%

^a Less than ½%.

Those 9 percent who said "depends" stated several qualifications they believe should be considered when deciding when and how to implement a sex education program.

These qualifications are presented below.

<u>Qualification</u>	<u>Percent (of total sample)</u>
Depends on age of student (starting age ranged from 6th grade thru high school)	4%
Depends on how sex education is taught, and by whom (moral and/or religious implications should be included)	2
Less should be taught about sex education	1
Parental approval should be required	a
Miscellaneous	^b 1
Not ascertained	<u>c</u>
TOTAL	9%

^aSeven-tenths of 1% expressed variations of this qualification.

^bThese responses included recommendations that home and local cultural mores be considered through concerns about how well and under what conditions sex education was included.

^cLess than ½%.

These responses indicate a high level of support for the inclusion of sex education topics in the curriculum. It is possible that regional and local opinions on this topic vary considerably across Wisconsin. Such variations would be obscured by this analysis because these figures are composite averages which smooth out and gloss over any such regional variations.

Question 13: Public use of school facilities.

On various occasions, community groups seek to use public school facilities for activities. Public opinion about such use was ascertained with this question.

Should or should not public school facilities be available during non-school hours for use by the local community for recreational and educational activities?

The responses:

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Should	83%
Should not	8
Depends	7
Don't know	2
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	100%
a	
Less than 1%.	

Those seven percent who responded "depends" included such qualifications as "it depends on amount of supervision and if the building is cared for" (3% of the total sample) and "it depends on the kind of activity for which facilities will be used" (1% of the total sample). The other three percent of the total respondents expressed concerns about the possible costs or the kinds of constraints that should be placed on such public use of school facilities.

Question 14: Parental involvement in regular school activities.

Public opinion about the desirability of parental involvement in ongoing school activities was measured by the following question:

Is it a good or a bad idea that parents have greater involvement in everyday within-school activities in public schools?

<u>Responses</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Good idea	84%
Bad idea	6
Depends	6
Don't know	4
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	100%

^aLess than ½%.

It is evident that a vast majority of Wisconsin residents support such parental involvement in regular ongoing school activities.

Question 15: Control of teacher certification.

Public opinion about the desirability of continuing the present method of certifying teachers, or the assumption of certification responsibilities by a teacher-controlled organization was sought via this question.

Presently, teachers are certified by the State Department of Public Instruction. Should this continue, or should teachers be certified by a teacher-controlled organization?

<u>Certification Controlled by:</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Department of Public Instruction	64%
Teacher-controlled organization	19
Depends	2
Don't know	15
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	100%

^a Less than ½%.

This issue is very complex technically, and this is reflected in the responses. Although a clear majority favored continuation of the present practices, a sizeable minority (19%) of the respondents favored changing to a teacher-controlled organization. (Notice that the nature of such an organization was not specified in the question, so each respondent was free to interpret this for themselves.) The relatively high percentage of respondents saying "don't know" to this question (15%) is probably an indication of the complexity of the issue.

Question 16: State or local control of course content.

Although the state provides general curriculum guides for most subject matter areas, decisions about actual course content have traditionally been left to local district people. Public opinion on the appropriate source of such control was assessed by asking the following question.

Presently, local school districts determine the content of courses offered in public schools. A mandatory and uniform statewide description of course content could be developed in each of the major subject matter areas--such as reading, math, language arts, and social studies. This would make sure that all schools in the state offered the same course content. Would you favor a uniform course content or the present local control?

<u>Responses</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Uniform course content	40%
Present local control	48
Depends	5
Don't know	6
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	100%

^a Less than ½%.

Public opinion is almost evenly divided on this potentially controversial topic. The "depends" responses should be interpreted as favoring some aspects of state prescribed course content, but only under certain conditions. The relatively low "don't know" response rate indicates fairly clear cut opinions on this issue are held by most Wisconsin citizens. These responses should also be interpreted in concert with the next two questions.

Question 17: Statewide minimum standards in major subject matter areas.

Public opinion on the question of enforcement of certain statewide minimum standards was measured.

Do you think the state should or should not enforce minimum educational standards for all local school districts in major subject matter areas?

<u>Enforcement of Minimum Standards</u>	<u>Percent</u>
State should enforce	82%
State should not enforce	10
Depends	1
Don't know	6
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	100%

^a Less than ½%.

This is very clear public support for state quality control of local school districts in major subject matter areas.

Question 18: Statewide comparison of local pupil performance.

Although the state is presently assessing pupil progress statewide in selected subject matter areas, the Wisconsin Assessment Program does not provide data permitting comparisons between individual districts. The mention of such comparisons can provoke strong disagreement between educators. Public opinion on this matter was sought by asking:

Do you approve or disapprove of having your local district pupil performance in reading, math, and written expression compared to the performance of pupils in other districts of the state?

<u>Responses</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Approve	68%
Disapprove	22
Depends	3
Don't know	6
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	100%

^a Less than $\frac{1}{2}\%$.

Public opinion on this issue is clear, and is divided between a majority supporting statewide comparison and a strong minority (22%) opposing such comparison. Taken in the context of responses to the preceeding two questions, this suggests the public wants state monitored quality control of the processes and output (pupil achievement) of local schools, but nearly half would balk at such monitoring and control extending to mandating certain course content.

Question 19: Out-of-school study.

Public opinion about the desirability of out-of-school study was sought. The opinions of those favoring such opportunities were probed by additional questions.

The main question:

Do you think high school students should or should not be given more opportunity for out-of-school study and work experience?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes, they should	71%
No, they shouldn't	18
Depends	7
Don't know	4
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	100%

^a Less than ½%.

The 78 percent who responded "Yes" or "Depends" were then asked the following two questions:

If these opportunities are provided, should this be during regular school hours, or at another time?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent (of total sample)</u>
During regular school hours	35%
At another time	20
Both	16
Depends	7
Don't know	a
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	78%

^a Less than ½%.

Should high school credit be granted for such experience?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent (of total sample)</u>
Yes	69%
No	5
Depends	3
Don't know	1
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	78%

^aLess than ½%.

Those responding "Depends" to this question voiced concern about the relation of the out-of-school experience to the courses the student was taking, the types of things the student was expected to learn, and how well the school monitored the experience.

These results show that approximately seventy percent of Wisconsin's residents favor both providing high school students with the opportunity for out-of-school study and work experience, and granting credit for such experience. About half would also favor such opportunities being provided during the regular school day.

Question 20: Legalization of teacher strikes.

Strikes by teachers and other public employees have become an emotionally charged issue nowadays. Public sentiment on this was probed with the following question.

At the present time, teachers do not have the legal right to go on strike. Should the laws be changed so that teachers can legally strike, are the present laws alright, or should they be strengthened to prevent all teacher strikes?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Legalize strikes	26%
Present laws alright	18
Strengthen laws	48
Don't know	7
Not ascertained	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	100%

Public opinion is clear on this issue; only one-fourth of the respondents favored teachers being granted the legal right to go on strike. Public opinion was so strongly against teacher strikes that nearly one-half favor strengthening the laws to prevent all teacher strikes.

Question 21: Balancing school enrollments by race.

Public opinion about the desirability of racial integration was measured by the following question. During the time period this opinion poll was being conducted, the papers and other media were carrying articles about Milwaukee's school integration plan. Hence, public opinion may have been affected by such news coverage. The question:

Should or should not school districts make special efforts to balance school enrollments by race?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Should	27%
Should not	60
Depends	6
Don't know	6
Not ascertained	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	100%

Scarcely more than one-fourth of the respondents favored schools making special efforts to achieve racial integration. Public opinion on this topic appears to be as clear as on most of the topics included in this survey, judging from the percent of respondents who reported they "didn't know" or that it "depends" on something. Responses to this question should be considered in conjunction with the responses to the next question.

Question 22: Methods of integrating schools.

Respondents were asked to rate how strongly they favored each of four possible methods of balancing school enrollments by race. As with Question 21, this question was asked at a time when Milwaukee's desegregation plan was being discussed repeatedly in the press.

The following are some of the methods school districts could use to balance school enrollment by race. For each of these methods, tell me if you strongly favor it, somewhat favor it, or are against it.

A. Busing within school district?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Strongly favor	21%
Somewhat favor	25
Against	49
Don't know	4
Not ascertained	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	100%

B. Busing between school districts?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Strongly favor	6%
Somewhat favor	17
Against	70
Don't know	6
Not ascertained	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	100%

C. Voluntary enrollment anywhere in the school district with the district providing transportation?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Strongly favor	34%
Somewhat favor	32
Against	30
Don't know	3
Not ascertained	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	100%

D. Voluntary enrollment in neighboring school districts?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Strongly favor	29%
Somewhat favor	33
Against	33
Don't know	4
Not ascertained	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	100%

These responses indicate only a small minority favored busing as a means of achieving integration. A strong majority were only lukewarm or definitely against such a method. A larger minority favored voluntary enrollment methods. However,

a majority of the respondents were only lukewarm or opposed such voluntary enrollment methods, too.

It should be emphasized that these are statewide averages, and there could be wide regional variations on this issue. In addition, the question is academic to most of the state, since minority populations are pretty well concentrated in the southeast quadrant of the state.

Question 23: Discipline

The popular media have been carrying reports about discipline and control problems in schools for several years now. The respondents' perceptions of the magnitude of this problem were measured with the following question.

Is the amount of pupil discipline and control in your local public schools very satisfactory, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very satisfactory	9%
Satisfactory	49
Unsatisfactory	29
Don't know	12
Not ascertained	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	100%

Although a clear majority of the respondents were satisfied with the level of pupil discipline and control in their local public schools, almost one-third were not. Most probably, there are regional differences in the amount of satisfaction which are obscured by this analysis, since urban areas are most often cited as having the discipline problems.

It should be noted that the respondents were fairly clear about their opinions (only 13% did not know or respond to this question).

Question 24: Student use of drugs and alcohol during school hours.

The media have also characterized drug and alcohol use by students as a problem. Public perceptions of the seriousness of this problem were measured by the following two questions:

Do you feel the use of drugs and alcohol by local public school students during school hours is a very serious problem, somewhat serious, or not a serious problem?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very serious problem	59%
Somewhat serious problem	24
Not a serious problem	10
Don't know	6
Not ascertained	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	100%

Question 25: Student use of drugs and alcohol after school hours.

Is the use of drugs and alcohol by local public school students after school hours a very serious problem, somewhat serious, or not a serious problem?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Very serious problem	59%
Somewhat serious problem	27
Not a serious problem	7
Don't know	7
Not ascertained	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	101%*

*Does not total 100% due to rounding.

The responses to questions 24 and 25 should be considered together. The pattern of responses is so similar that it is probable that the respondents were

expressing their perceptions of the use of drugs and alcohol per se by students, regardless of when it occurs.

A vast majority of the respondents (over 80%) believed drug and alcohol use by students is a problem, and over half of them viewed it as a very serious problem. How much their perceptions were influenced by the prevalence of this topic in the media is difficult to estimate.

Question 26: Public support for due process procedures.

The respondents were asked two questions about due process procedures. The first question explained what such procedures involved and measured how favorably they viewed such procedures. The second question ascertained their perceptions as to how such procedures might affect discipline.

The Supreme Court has recently ruled that students have the constitutional right to due process procedures before being suspended, expelled, or being otherwise seriously disciplined. At the very least, the Court said, this due process should include the students being told what they have been accused of, and being given the opportunity to present their side. The degree of formality under which this must be done depends on how severe the charges and possible punishment are. Do you agree or disagree that the schools should make every effort to insure that an accused student does get due process procedures?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Agree	85%
Disagree	5
Depends	4
Don't know	2
Not ascertained	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	100%

Public opinion was very clear on this issue; almost no one responded "don't know" or "depends" (only 6%). Nearly nine-tenths of the respondents favored due process procedures for students.

Question 27: Due process procedure's effect on discipline.

The second question concerning due process procedures was:

Do you think the Court's decision on due process rights for students will or will not make it harder for the schools to maintain discipline and control?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Will	31%
Will not	52
Depends	5
Don't know	11
Not ascertained	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	100%

Although a majority of the respondents did not think due process procedures will make it harder for schools to maintain discipline, a large minority (31%) believed such procedures will. Since almost thirty percent of the respondents already believe the amount of discipline and control in schools is not satisfactory (see question 23), the overwhelming support (88%) for due process procedures shown on question 26 is even more encouraging.

Question 28: State aid to parochial school students.

State aid to parochial school students is also a controversial topic, according to reports in the media, and public sentiment was sought about this matter. The respondents were provided a brief description of what the best available legal interpretations of the Wisconsin Constitution concerning state aid to parochial

school students. They were then asked their opinion on the extent of such aid that should be provided.

At the present time, the Wisconsin Constitution permits the state to provide non-religious textbooks, health and intelligence testing services, and transportation to parochial school children. In addition, it is probably constitutional to provide things to parochial school children on public school premises--for example, a special enrollment arrangement would permit a parochial school student to enroll in a course or courses in a public school. Is it a good or bad idea to have the state provide all such materials, supplies, and services to parochial school students to the fullest extent allowed under the Wisconsin Constitution?

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Good idea	63%
Bad idea	26
Depends	5
Don't know	6
Not ascertained	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	101%*

*Does not total 100% due to rounding.

Public opinion on this issue is clear, because relatively few respondents said it "depends" or "don't know." Slightly less than two-thirds of the respondents said it is a good idea, and one-fourth said it is a bad idea to provide state aid to parochial students to the fullest extent allowed under our state constitution.

APPENDIX A

Characteristics of the Sample

The respondents actually interviewed were selected by means of a sampling process designed and implemented by the Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory. The process involved generating a pre-defined number of four-digit random numbers for each of the telephone prefixes (the first three digits) used in Wisconsin. These resultant seven-digit numbers were screened to eliminate any that may have been included in earlier surveys.

Trained interviewers then called the screened numbers and, if the number was a residence, asked to speak to one of the residents in that household. The sex and age of the person requested were determined by a pre-defined process to insure proper representation by age and sex. If that particular person was not available, the interviewer called back several times to try to interview that person. The persons successfully interviewed as a result of this process are referred to in this report as the "respondents."

Because of different non-sample rates and other sampling considerations, W.S.R.L. weighted certain respondents more than others to compensate for the different selection probability used. The methods of determining these weights are beyond the scope of this publication, but it has been found that their use increases the accuracy of the estimates of the total state population made from the sample.

The total number of weighted respondents for this survey was 1,105. Such a number of respondents permits projections to the state population that have an expected precision of $\pm 4\%$ ninety-five percent of the time.* Thus, any of the percentages reported can safely be assumed to represent the population percentage plus or minus 4%.

*This is based on an estimated design effect of 1.25 for this sampling method and projections around population percentages of 50%, where the greatest estimation errors can occur. It is probably a conservative estimate of the precision.

Selected Demographic Characteristics

Sex. According to the 1970 census, 49 percent of Wisconsin's population was male, 51 percent female. The sample percentages were 44 percent male, 56 percent female.

Age. The sample was compared to both the 1970 census data and 1975 population projections for Wisconsin.^{1/}

<u>Age Range</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>1970 Census</u>	<u>1975 Projection</u>
18-24	16%	18%	20%
25-34	27	18	20
35-44	16	17	15
45-54	11	16	15
55-64	15	14	14
65-74	9	10	10
75 and over	5	7	6
Not ascertained	<u>1</u>	<u>--</u>	<u>--</u>
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%

Urban/Rural

The respondents were asked about where they lived, and this information was used to classify them according to urban/rural residence locations. The comparison base is 1970 census data for Wisconsin.

<u>Residence Location</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>1970 Census</u>
Urbanized Areas	42%	47%
Places of 10,000-25,000	11	10
Places of 2,500-10,000	16	9
Places of 1,000-2,500	9	5
Other rural	21	29
Not ascertained	<u>1</u>	<u>--</u>
TOTAL	100%	100%

State Assessment Reporting Regions

For the purposes of reporting results of the State Assessment Program achievement test results, Wisconsin is divided into four regions encompassing the various Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs). Using 1975 population projections, the population of each region was estimated.^{2/} The respondents' residence location descriptions were used to assign them to a CESA area, and the number of respondents in each region were tabulated as follows.

<u>Reporting Region</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Est. 1975 Population</u>
Northwest (CESAs 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 & 7)	19%	18%
Northeast (CESAs 3, 8, 9 & 10)	21	17
Southwest (CESAs 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 & 17)	21	20
Southeast (CESAs 16, 18 & 19)	39	44
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>	<u>--</u>
TOTAL	100%	99%*

^aLess than ½%.

*Does not total 100% due to rounding.

Selected Background Characteristics

Children in school. The respondents were asked if they had any children in school and whether their children were in public, private or parochial schools. Thirty-six percent of the respondents had at least one child in school (K-12) at the time of the survey. The distribution across the types of schools was as follows. (Duplicate count - some respondents had children in more than one type of school.)

<u>Type of School</u>	<u>Percent (of total sample)</u>
Public	32%
Parochial	6
Private or Independent (non-religious)	1

Familiarity with school. It was assumed that first-hand contact would increase the credibility of the respondents' answers, hence they were asked if they had visited a classroom during school hours anytime within the last five years. Fifty percent of the respondents said "yes."

School employees. If they said they had visited a classroom within the last five years, the respondents were asked if they were a teacher, administrator or other school employee. The results were:

<u>School Employee</u>	<u>Percent (of total sample)</u>
No	44%
Teacher	4
Administrator	a
Other School Employee	2
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	50%

^aLess than ½%.

Length of Wisconsin residence. The respondents were asked how long they had lived in Wisconsin. Sixty-nine percent had lived all their lives in Wisconsin. Only nine percent had lived less than two years in Wisconsin. About three-fourths of the respondents (76%) had lived at least five years in their present community.

Educational level. The respondents were asked the highest grade in school or year in college they had completed.

<u>Schooling Completed</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>1970 Census</u>
Less than 8 years	11%	30%
9 through 11 years	11	15
High school graduate	48	35
College (1-3 years)	13	10
College graduate	10	6
5 or more college years	7	4
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>	<u>—</u>
TOTAL	100%	100%

^aLess than ½%.

Note: The 1970 Census figures are not directly comparable to the sample, because they are based on persons 25 years or older, and the present sample included persons 18 and older.

Income. The respondents were asked their approximate total family income in 1975.

<u>Income</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>1970 Census</u>
Less than \$5000	13%	17%
\$5000 - \$6999	10	10
\$7000 - \$9999	15	22
\$10,000 - \$14,999	24	31
\$15,000 - \$19,999	15	} 20
\$20,000 or more	15	
Not ascertained	<u>8</u>	<u>—</u>
TOTAL	100%	100%

Note: Due to inflation, the 1970 Census data does not provide an accurate basis for comparison.

Racial/Ethnic background. The respondents stated their racial/ethnic background as:

<u>Racial/Ethnic Background</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>1970 Census</u>
White	96%	96%
Black	3	} 4
Other*	1	
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>	<u>--</u>
TOTAL	100%	100%

^aLess than ½%.

*"Other" includes Spanish-surnamed, Native American and Oriental-American.

Religious preference. The respondents stated their religious preference as:

<u>Religious Preference</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Catholic	41%
Jewish	2
Protestant	52
Other*	1
None	4
Not ascertained	<u>a</u>
TOTAL	100%

^aLess than ½%.

*"Other" includes Mormon, Jehovah's Witness, Church of Holiness, unspecified Christian, Eastern Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, and Baha'i.

Summary

Comparisons of the various background characteristics of the respondents to Wisconsin population characteristics indicate that the respondents were from all regions of the state and all appropriate age groups. There was a slight overrepresentation of persons from places with populations ranging from 1,000-10,000, and a slight underrepresentation of persons from the other rural regions of the state and from the urbanized areas.

The other background characteristics of the respondents show that half of them have had some first-hand contact with day-to-day school operations in the last five years, and that over one-third had children in school at the time of the interview. About three-fourths of them had lived in their present community for at least five years.

Thus, the respondents interviewed are representative of Wisconsin residents in a large number of ways, and the sample provides a good basis for generalizations to the whole state.

NOTES

1. 1970 census data for Wisconsin were obtained from: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population: 1970, NUMBER OF INHABITANTS, Final Report PC(1)-A51 Wisconsin; and GENERAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS, Final Report PC(1)-A51 Wisconsin.

1975 population projections were obtained from: Wisconsin Population Projections, Third Edition, prepared by the Department of Administration, State Bureau of Program Management, Information Systems Unit (Document No. BPM-IS-75-6), Madison, Wisconsin: Department of Administration, June, 1975.

2. 1975 population estimates for each reporting region were obtained by first estimating the 1975 population for each CESA, using the 1975 estimates for each county (where CESA boundaries included only part of a county, population was allocated proportional to county area included), and then summing these estimates to obtain the reporting region estimate.